

WALLACE, LEW

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Civil War Officers Union

Lew Wallace

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

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INDIANA HISTORY BULLETIN



Eng^d by A.H. Ritchie.

GEN. LEWIS WALLACE.

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COVER: General Lewis Wallace, the hero of Monocacy. The original is supplied through the courtesy of the Indiana Historical Society Library.

THIS ISSUE: The lead article, "When the Capital Was Spared," was written by Martha Eckert Schaaf. It is appropriate in this centennial year of the Battle of Monocacy, to remember that but for Wallace's stubborn resistance Washington City might have been captured or destroyed at a time when Confederate defeat seemed inevitable. Mrs. Schaaf is a native Hoosier (Madison, Indiana). She acquired a thorough knowledge of Wallace's career, both military and literary, when she calendared the extensive collection of Wallace papers for the Indiana Historical Society Library. In 1961, Bobbs-Merrill published her Wallace juvenile under the title, *Lew Wallace, Boy Writer*. Besides being a Wallace scholar, wife and mother, Mrs. Schaaf has also been employed as a teacher and librarian. In the second article, Jerry Marlette, the author of *Electric Railroads of Indiana*, shares an exciting episode of interurban history with the *Bulletin* readers.

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WHEN THE CAPITAL WAS SPARED

The President stood on Fort Stevens' parapet in hot July sun, a gaunt, tall target facing enemy guns some eleven hundred yards away. Though he felt for three years now the ghostly stalking horror of his war, for the first time he was seeing and hearing its awful sights and sounds— smoke, blood and bursting shells above cries of wounded and dying, and he watched and waited silently, motionless. A bullet found its deadly mark three feet away, another five feet farther. What game was fate playing now? Lines of concern that wearied Lincoln's face had grown deeper with the summer, for war's end was nowhere in sight, at this moment approaching the very doors of the Capital through brilliant strategy of Robert E. Lee, who saw an opportunity and seized it. Could reinforcements arrive in time? Lincoln waited as long columns of bluecoated veterans filed into the Fort.

What precarious circumstances brought Confederate troops to Washington on July 12, 1864? The story begins a few months earlier, when Ulysses S. Grant was promoted Lieutenant General commanding all Union forces in the fields. With Lincoln's approval, Grant launched the Wilderness Campaign to destroy Lee's Northern Virginia Army, objective Richmond, Confederate Capital. Hoping for an early victory, Union soldiers yelled "On to Richmond," the battle cry which became a wail during bloody days that followed. In six weeks the Union lost 63,000 men, the Battle of Cold Harbor alone claiming 15,000 to the Confederates' 1,500. Grant's scheme had gone awry. The Campaign ended ignominiously. Abandoning his plan of taking Richmond from the north, Grant replenished his army for the siege of Petersburg, drawing off veteran forces defending Washington, whose fifty-three forts required 25,000 men, now depleted to one-fifth that number. Grant persuaded Lincoln that within a day's notice he could send reinforcements from headquarters at City Point, Virginia.

Robert E. Lee, Confederate Commander-in-Chief, saw an opportunity, expressing it to President Jefferson Davis on June 26:

"Great benefit might be drawn from the release of the prisoners at Point Lookout, if that can be accomplished.. the prisoners liberated and reorganized and marched immediately on the road to Washington... At this time, as far as I can learn, all the troops in the control of the United

States are being sent to Grant, and little or no opposition could be made by those at Washington."

Supplying his Generals, Early and Breckinridge, with 20,000 men, Lee directed them to clear the Shenandoah Valley of remaining forces under the Union Generals Hunter and Sigel, and march to Washington, raid the City, capture the President, and draw Grant from Richmond. There was little Union resistance. On June 30th, Early's successes were reported to Washington, the information ignored.

Congress in final days of adjournment was bickering about readmitting and governing the Southern States, little concerned with their present victories. Cabinet members were airing their jealousies; politicians were plotting opposition to Lincoln's reelection. Grant reassured him that all was well. On July 3rd he wired: "There are no troops that can now be threatening Hunter's Department . . . Early's Corps is now here." That Grant was totally unaware of the Confederate advance or objective is beyond doubt.

This was not the first instance of Grant's misjudgment. He and Halleck were unprepared for the surprise attack at Shiloh two years earlier, where the Hoosier General, Lew Wallace, was blamed for the first day's defeat. In reality, his was the Division ready to march, and only because Grant's orders were misleading was the Hoosier unable to get into the fight on that tragic April Sunday. Earlier, at Fort Donelson, Wallace took the initiative and saved the victory for Grant. But with Shiloh, his valor ignored, Wallace was relieved, deprived of any command in the field of battle.

Two years after playing minor roles as a Major General, Lew Wallace gained the ear of Lincoln through his brother-in-law, Senator Henry S. Lane, more than anyone else responsible for Lincoln's nomination. In March, 1864, Lincoln sent for Wallace over the protest of General Halleck, Chief of Staff, and the silent disapproval of Secretary of War Stanton and Grant. Lincoln appointed Lew Wallace as Military Commander of Delaware and Maryland, the assignment more political than military, as the President remarked: "I came near forgetting that there is an election nearly due over in Maryland, but don't you forget it."

Setting of the "Star Spangled Banner" and donor of land for the Nation's Capital, Maryland was now a divided state, wavering in its approaching vote for a constitution prohibiting slavery. The military diplomat in charge, though faced with criticism, ordered that rebel subversives forfeit their right to vote, or swear to their loyalties at the polls. Two weeks later and two years after Shiloh, Maryland's vote was cast for the Union on April 6. In June Lincoln was renominated at the National Union Convention in Baltimore's Front Street

Theater with Wallace looking on. The Secretary of War complimented him, saying, "It was well done."

Though the Hoosier continued petty details of military government, starting the first Freedman's Bureau, tangling with spies and secessionists, he longed for honor won in battle. There seemed no likelihood, until the sudden turn of events launched by the master strategist, Robert E. Lee, plummeted war on Wallace's doorstep.

On July 2nd, the president of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, John W. Garrett, called on Wallace to express concern for his bridge over the Monocacy River. "My telegraph agents report a Confederate advance. We have no troops at Washington," he added. "I have apprehensions, and they have set me thinking." He proposed that Wallace guard the area adjacent to the bridge. The general explained that he had no field troops, that the limits of his command ended at the River, but he promised that "The bridge shall not be disturbed without a fight."

Mr. Garrett's apprehensions set Wallace to thinking. Where was General Hunter, where the enemy? Wallace had received no official news for two weeks, only rumors that Hunter had retreated to the Kanawha Valley. On July 4th a telegram arrived from General Sigel to confirm those rumors: "I have reports of an advance of the enemy in force down the Shenandoah Valley." Two days earlier Sigel had wired the same information to Grant and the Adjutant General without success, but Wallace took the news with alarm, sharing Mr. Garrett's concern. The enemy was in force, the Shenandoah Valley undefended, and roads to Washington opened wide!

Flame now burst from sparks of patriotism in the Wallace blood, nurtured since the Revolution when Wallace's ancestor, John Paul Jones, said in the face of defeat, "I have not yet begun to fight." The Crawfordsville soldier planned for battle. His knowledge was first gained as a youngster reading his father's (Indiana's Governor David Wallace) West Point texts; as a member of the Indianapolis Militia; as a lieutenant at 19 in the Mexican War; as leader of Montgomery County's Zouaves; as Indiana's Adjutant General and first soldier of the Civil War.

He called up all the sparsely scattered home guards he could muster, 2,300 against an enemy in force. What were the odds? Risk his command and the lives of these unseasoned troops? If destination was Washington, the navy yard, treasury, the President, there was no alternative. Though odds were against him, he would fight. He wired General Halleck of his intent, but received no confirmation. Then he left Baltimore without orders for battle at Monocacy Junction.

He surveyed the river valley rolling westward like a green and yellow carpet, its halfgrown corn and ripe wheat yet unspoiled by

bullets and blood. Three miles away the outline of Frederick City was softened by blue mist of the Catocin Mountains. There was no sign of the enemy. How could war come to this scene painted in such peaceful colors, the General, an artist in his spare time thought. He studied the river, its fords, the covered bridge of the Washington pike, the iron railroad bridge above it, and the stone "Jug" bridge two miles distant, leading to Baltimore. Ten thousand troops were not enough to hold them. Where were the Confederates now? He sent scouts beyond the mountains. They reported the alarming news that every road and pass on the far side was blocked, but brought back one ray of hope with word that Colonel Clendenin, Eighth Illinois Cavalry, was near the River. Wallace alerted him of the Confederate advance and proposed they make a stand before Frederick. News was waited expectantly. It came with the sound of gunfire, distant at first, then drawing nearer, wavering as Clendenin's force withdrew, then rallied, finally holding with nightfall. Wallace wired Halleck of the initial repulse on this date of July 7th, but received no answer, and the victory was short lived when Confederate forces came in strength, driving the outnumbered Cavalry into the City.

Realizing he could not defend the town and also hold the route to Washington, Wallace faced reality, ordering the mountain city evacuated. Townspeople who had cheered Union troops singing "Rally Round the Flag, Boys," at the initial victory, now turned the gas lamps low, hid their stars and stripes and hastily left before Confederates planted their flag on the Courthouse and exacted \$200,000 ransom.

Back at Monocacy Junction Wallace recounted his troops, now doubled to 5,800 with the unexpected arrival of General Ricketts and his Third Division, but still too few against 20,000. Yet he was determined to fight for three objectives: to learn the enemy's strength, destination, and delay the march if the goal was Washington. The next day of July 9th would give the answers.

In early morning the dramatic general, who looked every inch a commander, buckled his sword and then rode to inspect troops in formation along the riverbank. Across in the distance he noted with his field glass two columns of grey moving, one toward the wooden bridge to Washington, another ready to ford the river a mile below. "We must get a welcome ready for them," Wallace announced. "Send another company to the bridge, with kindling ready to burn it if necessary." Ricketts hastily reformed his Division to face south, to pour muskets and shells toward fields where trampled stalks of green soon covered wounded and dying. Column after column of rebel soldiers were moving on three sides, yelling and waving battle flags, coming

like a flood, churning and tossing, spilling over the river banks. The battle had lasted seven hours when Wallace ordered the bridge finally burned, and hastened retreat of his battered troops toward Baltimore. His objectives gained in spite of defeat, he sent warnings to Grant and Halleck: "I fought the enemy . . . from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. when they overwhelmed me with numbers. I am retreating with a footsore, battered and half-demoralized column. Forces of the enemy at least twenty thousand . . . You will have to use every exertion to save Baltimore and Washington."

Then Lincoln sent a telegram to Grant: "General Halleck says we have absolutely no forces here fit to go to the field . . . Wallace, with some odds and ends, and part of what came up with Ricketts, was so badly beaten yesterday at Monocacy that what is left can attempt no more than to defend Baltimore. Now what I think is, that you should provide to retain your hold where you are certainly, and bring the rest with you personally, and make a vigorous effort to destroy the enemy's forces in this vicinity. I think there is really a fair chance to do this if the movement is prompt."

Grant at last rushed troops by steamer to the Capital, while Jubal Early, delayed for a day at Monocacy, not stopping to liberate prisoners, marched sixty miles to the Seventh Street pike in sight of the Capitol dome. Guns of his forward ranks were being trained on Fort Stevens when he saw long lines of bluecoated veterans filing into the Fort. He decided then to withdraw, realizing that the Battle of Monocacy had cost him the capture of Washington. "I determined at first to make an assault," he wrote, "but before it could be made, it became apparent that the enemy had been strongly reinforced." Confederate troops withdrew, Lincoln's suggestion that a vigorous effort be made to destroy them was ignored by Grant.

What of Lew Wallace? The Secretary of War immediately removed him from Command, but before the month ended, the Hoosier General was hailed by the press as the one who saved the Nation's Capital, a hero like Horatius at the Bridge. Historians stated: "The Battle of Monocacy occupies much less space in history than it deserves. It was a stout and most creditable fight, and though a defeat in name and in fact, it accomplished so much as many a victory, for it delayed Early's march upon Washington two days." "It was one of the decisive battles of the world, and with the events which immediately followed it, deserves a much more complete account than it has hitherto received." Wallace penned an epitaph, later inscribed on the Battle's monument: "These men died to save the National Capital, and they did save it." Then he turned to other tasks, finally riding to fame with his hero, *Ben-Hur*.

Martha Eckert Schaaf

STREET FIGHT

by Jerry Marlette

The lines of battle were sharply drawn that dark and cloudy morning.

It was the 29th of May, 1903, and the crowd on Main Street in Crawfordsville, Indiana, was split into two bitterly opposed groups. On one side were ranged construction crews of the Indianapolis and Northwestern Traction Company and many of the city's citizens; on the other were the city officials, including the Mayor, City Council, and the entire Crawfordsville Police and Fire Departments.

The heavy, low-hanging clouds seemed to close in on the scene, which by now had become ominously quiet. The two factions—the crews with their heavy picks and piles of bricks dug from the street, and the city forces with their firehose and police nightsticks—looked to their respective leaders for the word to begin what might easily become the bloodiest brawl the city had ever known.

To fully understand the circumstances which would cause a situation of this nature, it is necessary to go back several months into the turbulent history of the project.

Early in 1902, the Consolidated Traction Company was organized by several Crawfordsville businessmen to build an interurban line from Lebanon, Indiana, to Crawfordsville. This company included among its directors several men who had been directors of the now defunct Indianapolis and Lebanon Traction Company and of the also defunct Lafayette and Indianapolis Traction Company. These two companies had fought a losing battle with Messrs. Townsend and Reed, of the Indianapolis and Northwestern Traction Company, for the right-of-way between Indianapolis and Lebanon.

With the Indianapolis and Northwestern planning an extension of its line to Crawfordsville, in direct competition with the Consolidated plan, and with the Consolidated directorate already animatedly hostile to the Indianapolis and Northwestern because of the Indianapolis to Lebanon right-of-way fight, the Lebanon-Crawfordsville struggle assumed gigantic proportions. Both companies were feverishly engaged in grading their rights-of-way between the two cities, while each line's attorney frantically attempted to secure for his own company the single franchise the city of Crawfordsville would grant for operation over the city streets. Securing this franchise was vitally important because it would allow the holder to dictate the terms for trackage rights to the loser.

After considerable deliberation, the City Council granted the franchise to the Indianapolis and Northwestern. The company granted a number of concessions required by the Council, and deposited a certified check as proof of good faith. However, the Council, in continued session, revoked the rights and awarded them to the "home" company, the Consolidated Traction Company.

The aggressive Townsend-Reed organization naturally resented this maneuver, and immediately prepared to challenge its legality. The Indianapolis and Northwestern imported an army of some one hundred and fifty men, including forty tracklayers from Danville, Illinois, and others from Vandalia, Illinois. This army, along with fifty wagonloads

of rails, ties, and tools, mobilized early on the morning of the 29th on the outskirts of Crawfordsville, where they were met by W. S. Reed and R. P. Woods, the company's chief engineer.

As Reed and Woods led the men into town, word quickly spread around the city, and by the time the procession reached the Courthouse, it resembled a circus parade. Hundreds of citizens, and of course all the boys and dogs in town, had joined the crews in their march. As the closely guarded wagons unloaded in front of the Courthouse, the sound of the rails and ties hitting the street brought many more people to the Square. When these newcomers discovered the proposed action, many volunteered to aid other citizens in helping the crews, while others cheered them on, as the majority of the population favored the Indianapolis and Northwestern over the Consolidated, due to the Indianapolis and Northwestern being an actual operating company.

When the Mayor became aware of this move, he ordered the Chief of Police to arrest the invaders, on a charge of obstructing the streets. The Chief arrested two laborers, but due to objections of the crowd he released them and returned for further advice to the Mayor's office, where the City Council was being hurriedly called together. After much debate, it was decided to call out the Fire Department. This was done, and the entire department was rushed to the Square. Also, the Chief of Police, with fifty deputies, and the City Attorney accompanied the Mayor and the Council to the scene.

Thus was the stage set for battle in the Crawfordsville Square. The firemen aimed their hose, the deputies grasped their nightsticks, the workers hefted their picks and selected bricks from the piles, while the crowd behind them attempted to select vantage points out of the line of fire.

Suddenly, the Fire Chief signaled to his men, and a stream of water shot forth from the hose, hitting the invaders squarely and knocking several to the ground. However, the company's contractor, standing nearby, motioned to his assistant, who immediately sank a pick into the hose, thereby rendering it useless. He was about to repeat the act in another section of hose when he was jumped by two councilmen, and, after all were thoroughly drenched, was relieved of his pick.

In the meantime, the firemen, finding their principal weapon inoperative, resorted to exchanging bricks with some of the workers, while the deputies engaged others armed with pick handles.

The melee continued for some time before the company called its men out of the fight, and an armistice was arranged. The police made fifty arrests, for each of which the company posted \$100 bond, and the company agreed to stop work within the city until a court decision had been given. Miraculously, no one had been seriously hurt during the fray, although one onlooker had been knocked out by a flying pick handle, and cuts, bruises, and black eyes were numerous.

The City Council then filed an injunction suit against the company, restraining it from any further work inside the city limits, and asking that its franchise be forfeited. The Council also filed a suit of contempt against the company, but this was dismissed when over a thousand citizens petitioned against it.

Although the City Council and the Consolidated continued their

opposition, the Indianapolis and Northwestern was successful in obtaining its desired franchise, and the line was completed and put into operation early in the fall of 1903. Upon issuance of the franchise to the Indianapolis and Northwestern, the Consolidated Traction Company dropped its work, although the company's promoters later reorganized as the Indianapolis, Crawfordsville, and Western Traction Company and built a direct line from Crawfordsville to Indianapolis.

To this day, however, many of the older citizens of Crawfordsville vividly recall that pitched battle in the Courthouse Square, one of the most violent episodes in the lusty youth of that long-vanished old friend — the interurban.

Prologue to Conflict: The Crisis and Compromise of 1850, by
Holman Hamilton. University of Kentucky Press, 1964.
236 pp. \$5.00

Holman Hamilton, a native of Fort Wayne, former newspaper man, and now professor of history in the University of Kentucky, has written a volume which is timely in that certain analogies can be drawn between the conflict and compromise of 1850 which he so ably analyzes and the present debates going in Congress today in the field of Civil Rights. In 1850 the United States had to face up to the problems of administering the vast recently acquired lands in the West which meant a threat to the precarious balance between North and South in the matter of slavery extension or prevention. As the crisis grew questions regarding fugitive slaves, Texas debts, and slavery and slave trade in the District of Columbia became involved in the sectional, political, and personal drama that dominated the Congress in this crucial year.

Professor Hamilton has done an admirable job in defining the elements of the crisis and following through the various measures embodied in the Compromise which was finally reached. In doing so, he has shown the dramatic parts played by not only the well-known Clay, Calhoun, and Webster, but also by influential but lesser known members of the Congress. After analyzing sectionally and politically the votes in both the Senate and House on the five measures which made up the Compromise, the author devotes a final chapter to the Compromise in operation, and why it failed and thus became a prologue to the tragic conflict that came a decade later. Particular note should be taken of the chapter on "The Texas Bond Lobby."

Gayle Thornbrough

NEW MEMBERS - IHS

New members enrolled in the Indiana Historical Society since January 9 include James F. Banta, Kansas City, Mo.; Mrs. J. Reed Barron, Fair Oaks, Calif.; Mrs. Albert J. Beveridge, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; British Museum, London, England; Donald R. Brown, Kalamazoo, Mich.; Mrs. Darlene Barnaby Burgess, Fresno, Calif.; Henry B. Carver, Moline, Ill.; John Cumming, Mount Pleasant, Mich.; Mrs. E. Donald Dietrich, College Park, Md.; Elda Grant, Prescott, Wash.; Joseph S. Guernsey, Orlando, Fla.; Mrs. Isaac Hardeman, Louisville, Ky.; Mrs. Reuben S. Harding, Columbus, Ohio; Lonna Hartley, Wheaton, Ill.; Mrs. Floyd G. Hill, Napa, Calif.; Philip Holliday, Chicago, Ill.; Mrs. Fauneil Huzdovich, Hialeah, Fla.; George F. Jerrell, San Antonio, Tex.; John M. Kelley, Lancaster, Ohio; Dr. Catharine Logan, Oak Park, Ill.; Mrs. Rosemary F. Lovell, Picayune, Miss.; Mrs. Dolores Lynch, Long Beach, Calif.; Mrs. Isabel M. McDaniel, Houston, Tex.; Edward C. McKinney, Jr., Danville, Ill.; Mrs. W. H. Metz, Birmingham, Ala.; Mrs. Gertrude Cornelius Mohr, Oildale, Calif.; Mrs. Nancy Belle Morrison, San Bernardino, Calif.; Mrs. Fern Forsythe O'Neill, Cheyenne, Wyo.; Mrs. Fanny Rea, Orland, Calif.; Dr. Elizabeth Reed, Butler, Ohio; Mrs. Harry McC. Righter, Conshohocken, Pa.; William E. Roberts, Fort Worth, Tex.; Mrs. Wilmer J. Robison, Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Mrs. Frank A. Schmitz, Dubuque, Iowa; Nada M. Seymour, Washington, D. C.; Herb Shriner, Beverly Hills, Calif.; Bobbie Slatten, Elk City, Okla.; Mrs. H. M. Sole, Fresno, Calif.; Mrs. Fred J. Spiser, Whittier, Calif.; Mrs. Hazel Stillwell, Joliet, Ill.; Union League Club of Chicago, Chicago, Ill.; University of California, Davis, Calif.; Dr. John F. Vallentine, North Platte, Nebr.; Ray E. White, Quincy, Ill.; Marvin D. Williams, Jr., Nashville, Tenn.; Mrs. Gladiolu Wristen, Phoenix, Ariz.

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OUTDOOR INDIANA



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The Photographs

Andrew Johnston captured icicle-rimmed canyons along Trail 3 through Rocky Hollow at Turkey Run State Park for this month's front cover. Inside the front cover, snow and ice dominate the winter landscape at Tippecanoe River State Park. Richard Fields photographed the scene near the canoe campground area. For the back cover, Fields photographed the restored Metamora Grist Mill, a popular attraction at the Whitewater Canal State Historic Site.

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There's more to the woolly Dutchman's pipe than meets the eye.

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A HUCKLEBERRY HOOSIER



By Steve Kash

Hoosier author-general Lew Wallace is best remembered for his novel, *Ben Hur*. Since the turn of the century, the novel has been made into a play and three movies. The latest movie version, filmed in 1959, won academy awards for best picture and best actor, Charlton Heston. Scenes from its spectacular chariot race between Ben Hur and the Roman, Messala, who lash and claw at each other as their chariots battle wheel to wheel, still thrill television and VCR viewers.

Wallace was also a Huckleberry Hoosier if ever one lived. When he was 16, Wallace and a friend ran away from their Indianapolis homes, floating a raft down the White River in hopes of making it all the way to the Gulf of Mexico. If they had not been caught, the boys intended to join the Texas navy and get even with the Mexicans for what they had done to Americans in places such as the Alamo.



The General Lew Wallace Study was built in 1894 on the grounds of Wallace's Crawfordsville home.

Sixty years later, after Wallace had won acclaim for *Ben Hur* and two other novels, and had been a major-general in the Union army during the Civil War, governor of the New Mexico Territory and ambassador to the Turkish Empire, he still loved running away from it all. One of his favorite escape spots was the Kankakee River basin, near Kouts, where he anchored a 28-foot, canvas-topped houseboat called "The Thing." In a nutshell, the grand old man of Hoosier literature was a nature enthusiast.

As recorded in his autobiography, Wallace's first affair with lady nature took place when he was six. His father had just moved the family to Covington from Brookville. Young Lew went head over heels for the Wabash, feeling it imbued with the storied splendor of the Nile, the Rhine or the giant Mississippi. He began playing along its banks almost daily. Eventually, he charmed a Covington area ferryman named Nebeker into allowing him to ride along as his assistant. Wallace was able to enjoy the Wabash's many pleasures until he was 10, at which time his father became the state's governor and moved the family to Indianapolis.

Three years after his unsuccessful attempt to raft to the Gulf of Mexico, Wallace successfully raised a company of Indiana soldiers. They elected him their second lieutenant. Then, he led them by train, steamboat and clipper brig to Mexico. At the time, Mexico was in a formal state of war with the United States; however, Wallace and his men never saw combat.

Upon returning home, he studied law, passed the bar and took a wife. Chafing at being a lawyer, which he considered tedious, Wallace eventually moved



Courtesy of General Lew Wallace Study

General Wallace writes on the grounds of his study. A statue of Wallace now sits on this spot where he spent many hours, in the shade of a beech tree, writing his novels.

to Crawfordsville where he became a state senator. For all appearances, he had put behind the life of a dashing adventurer in exchange for the satisfactions of career and family.

It was in 1858, at the beginning of the duck season, that State Senator Lewis Wallace began his next love affair with an Indiana river. Riding north by train from Crawfordsville, he came to the twisting, convoluted Kankakee — a river that until it was dredged and straightened in the early 1900s, was noted as having more bends per mile than a family of coiled rattlesnakes. For 20 miles on either side of the river the sweeping oxbows it formed wrenching itself across northern Indiana's flatlands made the land too swampy for raising anything but hordes of waterfowl, wild game and fish. The duck troves were immense. Accounts were frequently heard of men taking 500 to 1,000 in a few weeks — or days! Kankakee tales reached south toward Crawfordsville and Indianapolis, north to Chicago, east to the Atlantic Coast and from there on to Europe where noblemen were attracted to the northern Indiana river marshes.

In later years, after he made dozens more trips to the Kankakee, Wallace would say of the river, "Never in all my world travels have I found a more perfect spot, or a more tantalizing river." His wife Susan came to call the Kankakee, "his happy hunting grounds."

Wallace and his companion during the inaugural trip to the Kankakee, Samuel Wilson, set up their tents near Baum's Bridge, southwest of Kouts. While they hunted, fished and camped, the men argued the burning issue of the day, slavery.



Courtesy of General Lew Wallace Study

Lew Wallace entertaining friends aboard his houseboat "The Thing" on the Kankakee River. Wallace spent many duck seasons hunting in the northern Indiana marshes.

Wallace was supposedly somewhat in doubt as to what position he should take regarding slavery before the trip. By the time he went home he was against it.

At least once, and perhaps several times before the Civil War, Wallace ventured back to the Kankakee on hunting and fishing trips. When the war came, Wallace's military brilliance, sense of command and adventuresome streak enabled him, at 35, to become the youngest major-general in the Union army. He is credited with preventing the Confederates from capturing both Cincinnati and Washington, D.C.

After his only major setback, when he met with near disaster at the Battle of Shiloh, Wallace sought a respite from the trials of war. In early July 1862, he returned to, as he said in his autobiography, ". . .the one friend I was sure of — the Kankakee River, pitching a Heiman tent on its bank, in the royal festoonery of its vines, the shade of its birch and maples. . . ." He told men in the hunting clubs near Baum's Bridge, "Been laid up on the shelf, militarily." In late August, he got a message from Governor Morton calling him back into action.

In post-Civil War years, Wallace visited the Kankakee at least three times a year when he was in Indiana, normally going during the two duck seasons and while the pickerel were running. He was camped at Baum's Bridge when a telegram arrived in 1880 telling him that *Ben Hur* had been accepted for publication.

When he returned to Indiana in 1885, after his term of ambassadorship to the Turkish Empire, Wallace made one of his most notable river rafting

accomplishments. He bought The Thing, which has also been called The White Elephant.

The Thing was 10 feet wide and 28 feet long. According to histories of Wallace along the Kankakee, the boat had been a steam-powered barge used by the White Star Lumbering Company to take wood downriver to Momence, Illinois. But, after the lumber company took it on a few trial runs, they found it unsuitable. Wallace redecked the boat with good flooring fitted with iron pipe floor flanges and put up a framework of iron piping to support a canvas top.

The Thing was divided into three canvassed cabins. At one end of the houseboat was a galley and a berth for an elderly black man who served as boat's cook and Wallace's all-purpose helper. The other end of the boat was Wallace's cabin and berth. The middle area was where he wrote, loafed or entertained guests. Fishing was done from the front and back decks.

For the first few years he had The Thing, Wallace anchored it near Baum's Bridge. The opening page of his final novel, *The Prince of India*, says, "Begun, Sept. 1886 on the Kankakee." He later told acquaintances he wrote 13 chapters of *The Prince of India* while camped near Baum's Bridge on his houseboat.

Then, he began moving the boat away from its Baum's Bridge mooring, taking it to anchorages along the Kankakee's remote back bends so he could get away from a continual stream of unwanted visitors. People may have come because of *Ben Hur*'s astonishing success. By 1887, it was selling 4,500 copies a week. *Ben Hur* eventually became the most acclaimed biblical novel of all time.

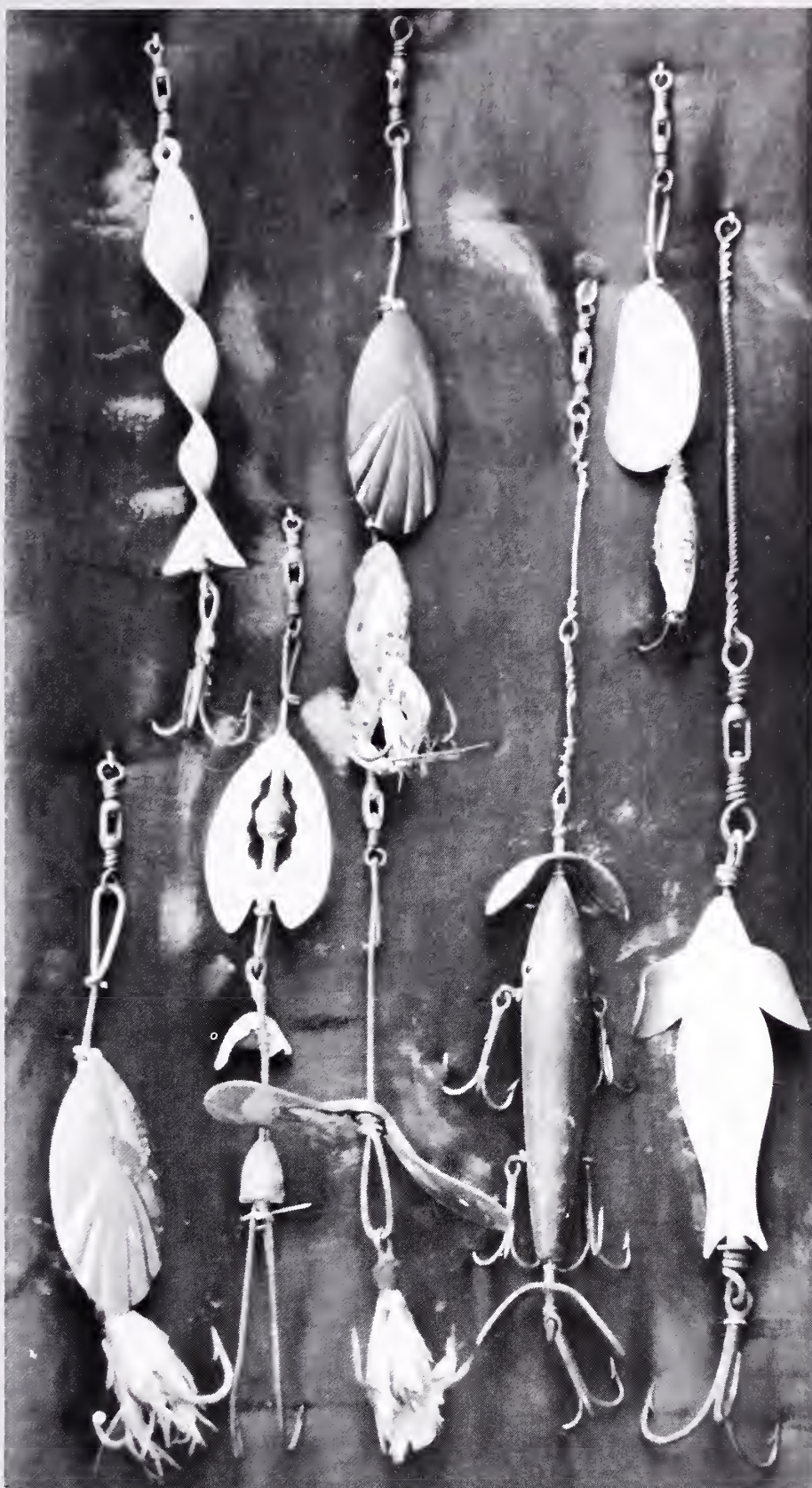
When he wanted human contact, Wallace would return The Thing to a dock at Deep Elbow. This was an anchoring point at the base of a high sand bank leading up to The Pittsburgh Gun Club, a famous hunting club near Baum's Bridge.

Wallace had a variety of friends visit The Thing. They ranged from president-elect Benjamin J. Harrison — who once borrowed the craft to get away for a few days — to regular Hoosier pals like Kouts' druggist, John Benkie. Benkie liked to join Wallace on his houseboat for an evening pipe.

After the turn of the century, Wallace's visits to the Kankakee became infrequent. The most historically important visit he made after 1900 was a 1901 stay on The Thing while recuperating from surgery. During this trip, he learned of President McKinley's assassination. Thereupon he wrote an article, "Preventing Presidential Assassinations," which received nationwide news coverage and has been credited with stimulating the present-day Secret Service.

In 1904, Wallace made his last visit to the Kankakee. He passed away on Feb. 14, 1905. A New York paper reported the event by saying, "The world has sent St. Peter a wonderful valentine."

Mrs. Wallace requested that her husband's boat be allowed to gradually deteriorate into the riverbank after his death. But, his son Henry allowed its steam engine to be purchased. When Henry sold off property his father had



Steve Kash

A collection of Wallace's fishing lures are on display at the General Lew Wallace Study in Crawfordsville. Wallace enjoyed fishing in the moat around his study, and from his houseboat in The Great Kankakee swamp. He could also frequently be seen driving his electric buggy, with fishing gear beside him, between his home and Sugar Creek.



Courtesy of General Lew Wallace Study

The General and one of his grandsons fish in the moat around his study.

next to the Pittsburgh Gun Club, he gave permission for the houseboat to be dismantled so that its wood might be put to good use.

Portions of The Thing became an old riverman's cabin, which is still situated on property which had been Wallace's. The cabin sits at the top of a ramp Wallace constructed so the boat could be taken from the Kankakee in wintertime.

Two years after Wallace's death, the Kankakee's classic oxbow channels began being changed by man. By 1917, connecting ditches had transformed the once luxuriant Kankakee marshes into farmland.

Pictures of Wallace on his houseboat and a variety of other momentos related to his life can be seen at the General Lew Wallace Study. The Study, located in Crawfordsville, is now a National Historic Landmark.

The Study was built on the grounds of Wallace's Crawfordsville home in 1894. Wallace attached such importance to work being done properly on the building that he did not visit the Kankakee for the year it was being built.

A statue of Wallace was put up on the Study's grounds after he passed away. The statue stands in the place where he used to sit outside his house and write novels in the shade of a tall beech tree.

Inside the Study visitors can see Wallace's fishing lures, one of his shot guns, and a collection of his extra-long cane poles. He did not like fishing with standard length cane poles because he did not feel they enabled the fish to give him enough fight. Therefore, he connected two, three, or more poles together with small metal ferrules he screwed on at their joining points.

Wallace liked fishing so much that after the Study was finished he had a moat dug around it, stocked the water with fish, and enjoyed afternoons of angling for them from the Study's steps with his grandchildren.

One living man still remembers seeing Wallace taking off and returning from one of his fishing trips in the Crawfordsville area. John Clements, a 92-year-old, was interviewed in 1986 by Martha Cantrell, a Crawfordsville area historian, concerning, in part, his memories of Lew Wallace.

The scene Clements recollects happened along the road between Wallace's winter home, near his Study in Crawfordsville, and his summer home a few miles west of Crawfordsville. This house was up the hill from another of his favorite fishing places, Sugar Creek. The site of Wallace's summer home was in an area called Water Babble because of the number of interconnected spring-fed ponds terracing the hill above this stretch of Sugar Creek.

"I used to see General Lew Wallace come by in his little electric buggy when he was going out to Water Babble," Clements said. "And you could see that fishing bucket there on the seat beside him. It (the car) just looked like a buggy if I can remember it. The top was always up; he never had the top down. He would steer it with a little stick instead of a steering wheel. I think I could run as fast as it went. But he would come by, and I would see him going out and coming back. I suppose he had his fish."

"Did you wave to him?"

"Well, no, I don't remember that I did, 'cause I'd be nine years old when he died, so I wasn't very big."

"Was he dignified acting?"

"Not when he went by there because he had on his old clothes."

Steve Kash is a free-lance writer interested in Indiana history. Kash lives in Terre Haute.

Stream Of History



*By Gary Eldridge and
Lisa Hoffman*

Rex and Tony's leisurely day begins at noon and ends at 3:30 p.m. For "work," they tow the passenger canal boat Ben Franklin at the Whitewater Canal State Historic Site in Metamora. Their 25-minute stroll covers a mile, roundtrip, through the Duck Creek Aqueduct to Gordon's lock, #24 at Millville, and back. On a weekday they make three trips; on a weekend, they make eight trips from 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. It may sound like a lot, but it is nothing for Rex and Tony.

Big and brawny, these two Belgian draft horses stand 6 feet high at the shoulder and weigh in at 2,000 pounds each. Their foot-wide hooves are ideal for pulling heavy loads. Nose to tail, they walk down the towpath at a two-mile per hour pace.

Next season they will be hauling a new Ben Franklin. The red, white and blue canal boat's new design is in the style of the impressive "line" boats that carried cargo and travelers. The boat's superstructure, or top, will be wooden, in keeping with the design popular in the 1800s. The hull of the 74-foot-long boat will be fiberglass to improve durability. The new Ben Franklin will hold 80 people.

A banjo player will entertain passengers while an interpreter explains what living conditions were like in a typical cabin. Special seasonal and evening programs are in the works for dinner and corporate party cruises. Voyagers will also have the unique opportunity to ride through a canal lock. Few of these historic structures are still operating. The next closest "lock-through" is in Pennsylvania.

In the old canal days, from the 1840s

The original Metamora Grist Mill (above) was built in 1845 next to lock #25 by Jonathon Baner. It burned in 1899 and was replaced in 1900 by the mill which stands in Metamora today.

to the 1860s, the horses did not have it as easy as Rex and Tony. The boats they towed then were huge, big enough to carry dry goods, cattle, people and their possessions. Truly beasts of burden, horses plodded along at the canal speed limit — as fast as a man could walk or four miles per hour.

The boats couldn't go any faster or the higher speeds made waves, eroding away the dirt embankments. "High" speeds caused the boats to nose down into the mud, dragging the bottom and forcing the horses to strain harder.

Wallace, Maj. Lew



strung like beads on a string. The theme of



GENERAL LEW WALLACE.

*From "The Autobiography of Lew Wallace,"
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